



SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO
2ND DISTRICT, WEST VIRGINIA

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
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COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515-4802

June 3, 2014

2366 RAYBURN H.O.B.
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-4802
202-225-2711

4815 MACCORKLE AVE.
CHARLESTON, WV 25304
304-925-5964

300 FOXCROFT AVE.
SUITE 102
MARTINSBURG, WV 25401
304-264-8810

WWW.HOUSE.GOV/CAPITO

Ms. Terry Gerigk Wolf
Director and Chief Executive Officer
Pittsburgh Veterans Affairs Healthcare System
University Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15240

Dear Director Wolf,

The recent allegations of secret waiting lists for veterans at the Phoenix VA Health Care System and indications from the VA Office of Inspector General interim report that this is a system-wide problem have shaken the trust of our veterans. Additionally, a news report in the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review alleged that the Pittsburgh VA has a waiting list of nearly 700 veterans, many of whom have waited for more than a year to receive care.

In the wake of Friday's resignation of Secretary Eric Shinseki, it is essential that the VA work to fix these systemic failures. Our veterans have defended this nation, and they deserve the best care and benefits for the injuries they have sustained in that service. As public servants, it is essential that we do our very best to ensure that these brave men and women receive the care they have earned, expect and deserve.

As the daughter of a wounded World War II veteran, I have a great appreciation for our nation's veterans and sympathy for the obstacles they face in obtaining medical care. As a member of Congress, I want to ensure that no West Virginia veteran is subjected to mistreatment like the alleged acts in Phoenix and at other VA centers.

West Virginia is blessed with one of the highest concentrations of veterans in the country, with nearly 10 percent of our citizens having served our nation in the armed forces. Many of the veterans I have spoken with have told me that they receive care from the Pittsburgh VA either due to proximity or by referral.

In light of the Phoenix allegations and the findings of the VAOIG interim report, I would appreciate answers to the following questions:

- (1) What is the current average waiting time for a veteran who seeks medical care at your facility?
- (2) How many veterans from West Virginia receive care from your facility?

- (3) How many West Virginians are waiting to receive care from the Pittsburgh VA?
- (4) Do you prioritize veterans who have disabilities or live in rural communities when scheduling patients?

Two of my colleagues, Representatives Tim Murphy and Mike Doyle of Pennsylvania, sent you a letter with questions about the yearlong wait list at your facility. I would like to echo and broaden their request to apply to all veterans from West Virginia – I ask that you prioritize veterans with disabilities and veterans who have to travel long distances as you work to reduce this backlog. Many rural veterans rely on shared transportation for medical treatment, and I hope your staff will work with rural veterans and readily accommodate their transportation needs when scheduling appointments.

I would appreciate a prompt response to my letter by June 6, 2014. If you have any questions, please contact Andrew Stasiowski in my Washington, D.C., office at (202) 225-2711. Thank you for your attention to this very important matter.

Sincerely,


Shelley Moore Capito, MC